

AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
ABORIGINES
OF
NOVA SCOTIA,
CALLED
THE MICMAC INDIANS.

London:

Printed by Luke Hansard & Sons, near Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

1822.





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NAMES OF ARTICLES

Imported from Nova Scotia in 1822, upon
which His Majesty's Government has re-
mitted the Duty:—

MODELS OF CANOES.

SNOW SHOES.

MOCASSINS OR INDIAN BOOTS.

WORK BASKETS.

NESTS OF BOXES.

BOXES.

HAT BOXES.

FRUIT BASKETS.

TABLE MATS.

CHILDREN'S TOYS.

*This Experiment is intended to be aided by
the following little Publication.*

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THE following Extracts from Publications of Walter Bromley, esquire, late paymaster of the 23d Fusileers, represent the unfortunate *Micmac Indians* in a favourable point of view. This gentleman has not done them more than justice; it is to be hoped, that his benevolent exertions, and those of some other well-intentioned persons, will improve the prospects of this people. In proportion as public attention is henceforward directed towards our colonies in North America, it is to be expected, that all those who have transactions with them, either in their own country or abroad, will treat them with more consideration, and with greater justice, than they have hitherto met with.

EXTRACTS.

“The number of Indians in the province of Nova Scotia, including 300 families in the Island of Cape Breton, may probably amount to 1,300; and although they generally speak English, and are scattered over the face of the country, they have made little progress in civilization. They have embraced the Catholic Religion, in consequence of the French having been the first settlers. Like other Indians, they live in the woods, contiguous to lakes and rivers, and subsist chiefly by fishing and shooting; they also manufacture a few baskets and boxes;

some of which are very tastefully ornamented with porcupine quills."

"The Indians of Nova Scotia, called *Micmac*, are harmless unless provoked, and their honesty is proverbial. They are of the middle stature, faces broad, aquiline nose, coarse black hair, and complexion nearly of a copper colour. Their covering is a blue frock or coat, with a girdle tied round the waist, with trowsers of the same for the men; and a blanket with a blue cloth petticoat, and a cap resembling a sugar-loaf, ornamented with beads, generally compose the dress of the women."

"The men are by no means so dissipated in their habits, as some prejudiced or uninformed authors have represented them; and while it must be admitted, that there are many confirmed drunkards in the neighbourhood of Halifax, yet it is also certain, that there still exists a considerable proportion of sober, intelligent characters, in various parts of the country, who are by no means averse to agricultural pursuits; as has been recently proved by actual experiment."

"The best means of affording them a regular subsistence, is to give them employment; and for this desirable purpose a plan has been in operation during the last five years, which has so far succeeded as to prove, by actual experiment, that the majority of the Indians are by no means averse to agricultural pursuits, or the habits of civilized life. Nothing therefore is wanting but pecuniary aid."

The following Memorial contains the necessary information relative to the improvements made up to the Spring of 1819.

“To the Honourable the House of Assembly,
now convened at Halifax :

“The PETITION of WALTER BROMLEY, in
behalf of the INDIANS of Nova Scotia ;

“Humbly Showeth,

“THAT your Petitioner, encouraged by the experiment which he has lately made, in ascertaining whether these forlorn brethren of the woods were capable of being trained in some measure to the habits of civilized life, has now the pleasure of laying before your Honourable House, the following particulars ;—viz.

“That during the last autumn your Petitioner visited the settlement at Shubenacadie, which consists of 12 families, and found that they had cleared $50\frac{1}{4}$ acres of land, 23 of which contained excellent crops of potatoes, turnips, and every kind of grain peculiar to the country, all of which were inclosed by good fences : they had taken the greatest care of six cows given them by your Petitioner ; for the subsistence of which they have since (of their own accord) cut from 20 to 30 tons of hay. Their poultry had also increased abundantly. They have besides erected one excellent log, and two frame houses, which they would willingly have occupied this winter, had not the early frost prevented the completion of the chimneys.

Those improvements were carefully examined by James Moore, esq. a magistrate, and Mr. John Wallace, of Shubenacadie, who furnished a joint certificate of the above facts, for the information of His Excellency the Governor.

"Petitioner also visited a settlement of Indians at Gold River, in the vicinity of Chester, consisting of 32 persons, who, during the last winter, for the first time, applied for assistance. These Indians had also during the last summer, made considerable improvement: six acres of their land was in the best possible state of cultivation, and contained excellent crops of potatoes, cabbages, turnips, barley, and English hay, all of which were enclosed by good fences: they have also assisted in erecting two frame houses, which they now occupy; and as their crops of potatoes, &c. were carefully stored, they have not required the usual supply of fish and meal given by Petitioner to other Indians. A certificate of the foregoing facts was furnished, for the information of His Excellency the Governor, by David Crandal, esquire, a magistrate, residing at Gold River, whose disinterested aid in this cause of suffering humanity has produced the happiest effects.

"Petitioner could enumerate other pleasing information respecting the improvements made by smaller divisions of Indians, who have been furnished with seed potatoes, &c.; he will, however, briefly state, that if the means afforded were commensurate with the

magnitude of the object, in a few years none but the most abandoned Indians would be found in an uncivilized state in Nova Scotia, as he finds, from his constant intercourse with the transient Indians, that there is an increasing disposition on their part to become settlers, provided they could be furnished with the common necessities of life, for a limited period; but the circumscribed funds which have been entrusted to the care of your Petitioner by some benevolent friends in England, have amounted to no more than sixteen dollars per annum for each Indian, which have been conscientiously expended in the purchase of meal and fish, some articles of clothing, materials for building, tools, &c. which, added to upwards of 100l.* gratefully received by your Petitioner from His Excellency the Governor, for the purpose of furnishing seed during the last two years, have been the means of proving beyond a doubt, that by a patient perseverance in this cause, the greatest difficulties may be surmounted; and under this impression, your Petitioner is again induced to appeal to the feelings of the members of the Legislative Body, for such aid as in their superior wisdom they shall deem fit to grant.

And your Petitioner will ever pray.

"Feb. 26, 1819.

"W. BROMLEY."

The prayer of the foregoing Petition was ably supported by two of the most respect-

* A part of the sum of 250l. voted by the House of Assembly for the benefit of the Indians.

able members; yet, when the question was called for, there appeared a *parity* of votes; the Speaker therefore submitted to the Members, whether, agreeably to the rules of the House, he might be permitted to give the casting vote in favour of the Petition; which he was told he could not do, as it was an appeal for *pecuniary assistance*: he had therefore no alternative but to vote against it.

It is difficult to describe in sufficiently strong terms, the gross barbarities which have been inflicted by white men upon this unhappy people.

In Mr. Bromley's Appeal on behalf of the Indians, printed in Nova Scotia, in 1820, p. 24, he says:—"One of the chiefs, who took up his abode with me a few weeks ago, appeared much agitated while he related the circumstance of the white people having obtained a grant of the burying-ground of his ancestors, whose bones they had lately ploughed up; and this to an Indian is a species of sacrilege which he never can forgive. I am also acquainted with a particular part of the province of Nova Scotia, where a most ancient burying-ground of the Indians is now in the possession of the white people; who, however, out of courtesy, still allow them to bury their dead there." Mr. Bromley adds, "While reading over this part of my manuscript to a friend, a native of this country, he assured me that the white people had not only dispossessed them of their land, but that they had also driven them from their

“ fishing-ground ; and he related the following anecdote, as he was an eye-witness to the circumstance, which took place last autumn :—

“ In Chedebucto Bay, contiguous to Fox Island, in the eastern part of Nova Scotia, where the Indians have been in the constant habit of fishing, and supplying the white fishermen with their manufactures, peltry, &c. for several years, they have been expelled in the most brutal manner from that fishing ground by the white people, who entered their camps, defiled their women, abused and beat the men, and, in fact, conducted themselves in such a manner as to prevent the possibility of their remaining any longer. My friend assures me, that he has purchased from those Indians, during his visits to that place, more than 300 barrels of mackerel. He described them as strictly honest, sober, and intelligent.”

Since the publication of Mr. Bromley's Appeal, the fishing place which he speaks of is reported to have been restored, by the authority of the government of Nova Scotia.

A female correspondent of Mr. Bromley (p. 35), the lady of a military officer, mentions her endeavours to persuade an Indian to cultivate the soil, and states, that “ his grand objection to settling was, the fact of some Indians having done so, and planted potatoes, when a white man came (with a grant of the land she possessed) and took it from them.” Upon this Mr. Bromley

remarks, "This is too often the case : indeed, " you will scarcely meet an Indian, but who " will tell you that he has cleared and cultivated land some time or other, but that " the white men have taken it from him. " A chief told me a few weeks ago, that his " father had cleared no less than 200 acres " in different parts of the province ; but that " he had been dispossessed of the whole by " the white people."

But the time for these practices seems to be passing away. After years of perseverance on the part of the friends of the Indians in the United States of America, the cause of humanity has triumphed ; and very great exertions are now making there on behalf of all the aborigines of the northern continent. What has hitherto been the work of individuals, is become the deliberate object of Government, upon a scale adequate, it is to be hoped, to its accomplishment.

England has also begun a reform with respect to the traders in the fur countries, some of whom, by their evil practices, have done enormous wrong to the natives ; and the large sums of money dedicated to civil and religious purposes for the Indians, will probably be expended more judiciously, as the subject becomes better understood than it has hitherto been. It is earnestly to be hoped, that general principle of JUSTICE will be acted upon towards them in future.

The sale of the few manufactures* now offered to the public, is intended as an expe-

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riment, for the purpose of ascertaining whether, in one small branch of industry, the Aborigines of Nova Scotia are utterly deficient of means of self support. It is thought, that if all the transactions with them are conducted with *ordinary* integrity, that they will not fail to perform that part in the world which the Deity seems to have assigned to all races of men—the multiplication and improvement of their species.

The testimony of the earliest as well as of the latest travellers, is favourable to the opinion, that Indians are susceptible of civilized habits. Jacques Cartier, the discoverer of Canada in 1534, says, “the men, women and maidens, gathered themselves together, part of which had their arms full of young children; and as many as could come to rub our faces, our arms, and what parts of the body they could touch, showing us the best countenance that possible was, desiring us, with their signs, that it would please us to touch their children: as far forth as we could perceive and understand by this people, it were an easy thing to bring them to some familiarity and civility, and to make them learn what one would.”

Few persons will refuse to join sincerely in Cartier's concluding prayer, that “the Lord God, for his mercy's sake, may set thereunto his helping hand when he seeth cause. Amen.”

Printed by Luke Hansard & Sons,
near Lincoln's-Inn Fields, London.

